H. Mortimer Esq. with
The kind regards of the Preacher.

# CAUSES OF MINISTERIAL SADNESS.

## A SERMON

PREACHED IN ST. JAMES' CHURCH, PARIS, U. C., ON QUINQUAGESSIMA SUNDAY, 11th FEBRUARY, 1866,

BY THE

REV. ADAM TOWNLEY, D. D.,

INCUMBENT.

Printed by the Congregation.

"Consider what I say, and the Lord give you understanding in all things."

PARIS:

PRINTED AT THE STAR OFFICE.

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# MEETING OF MEMBERS OF ST. JAMES' CHURCH.

At a meeting held at Mr. L. Brown's Office, on Thursday the 15th instant, attended by several members of the congregation of St. James' Church, W. G. Powell, Esq., Chairman, and J. W. Acres, B. A., Esq., Secretary, the following resolution was submitted and carried unanimously :

"Wherras the inclemency of the weather on Quinquagessima Sunday morning was such as to prevent many of the families usually attending St. James' Church, being present on that occasion, and that those who were privileged to hear the very able Sermon then delivered by the Reverend Dr. Townley, have been much impressed by the same, and anxious both that their fellow churchmen should be participators in the spiritual benefits that the sermon is eminently fitted to convey, and also that they themselves may have the opportunity of perusing it at their leisure, therefore,

Be it resolved, that the Rev. Dr. Townley be requested to furnish a copy of said sermon for publication."

PARIS, U. C., 16th Feb'y, 1866.

MY DEAR PARISHIONERS :

I thank you for your kindly appreciation of my sermon on Quinquagessima Sunday morning. Your request also cheers me, because, I know that feeling deeply I complained, perhaps, almost severely, and the spirit in which you have evidently received my earnest remonstrances, betokens, I trust that "that most excellent gift of Charity" is, through the Divine goodness not without its blessed influence in your hearts ; praying that this influence may be strengthened, and that the sermon which I enclose, and which you propose to print may do all the good you hope.

Believe me,
Your faithful friend and servant in Christ,

ADAM TOWNLEY.

MESSRS. POWELL, ACRES,
L. BROWN, and others,
Paris, U.C.

# Causes of Ministerial Sadness.

I CORINTHIANS XIII. 13.—"But the greatest of these is charity."

Faith and Hope are graces which bring us near to the Throne of God, but *Charity*, or the love of God and our brother in our hearts, is that which makes us *one* with Christ, and fills us with the Holy Ghost—the very Spirit of God Himself.

My Brethren, I could oft times, as when, for instance I behold so meagre a congregation as the present one, apply the Apostle's words to myself and say, "I have great heaviness and continual sorrow, in my heart," because I see so comparatively little of this Divine Charity—this beautiful, energetic and self-denying love—displayed in your lives and conversation. I sorrow for my gentle and loving *Master*, for the dimning of His glory, and the cold return to His love. I sorrow for *you*, for your present loss of peace—of a soul reviving peace—such as the world can neither give nor take away, and for the great risk you are running of coming altogether short of eternal glory; yea, I sorrow from knowing that, at the best, your present lukewarm relations to Christ are certainly diminishing the *fulness* of your future happiness and that forever! I sorrow for *myself*, being constrained to ask, "Wherefore is it that the 'good pleasure of the Lord doth not appear to prosper more abundantly in my hands?'" I have not shunned to declare unto you the whole counsel of God, until, though I can honestly say, I have striven to do so in the charity and *love* thereof, I fear I have offended some, by insisting upon certain portions of that "counsel," which the proud and fleshly heart of man in this day liketh not; and, yet my beloved, where are the fruits of these labours and efforts after faithfulness? Where is that deadness to the world? that longing to do something for the blessed Jesus? that real yearning of bowels of mercy over your Brethren, your kinsmen according to the flesh, who are in want or sorrow, and especially for those who are 'living without God and without hope in the world, and who, therefore, as sure as God is righteous, have hell

and destruction in their path?' Where I say are these fruits of my teaching and prayers to be found? Oh, I do sorrow that they appear to be doing so little for you, seeing that your hearts remain thus callous to the privileges and duties of your 'high vocation.' I know my feebleness, I know my unworthiness, I know, bitterly know, my own want of a deeper measure of that burning charity which brought Christ from heaven and caused His earnest Apostle cheerfully to suffer "the loss of all things," almost of heaven itself, for the sake of Christ and his redeemed; but surely, my brethren, our half empty Church, your slowness in running on every opportunity to meet Christ here, your backwardness to come up to the help of the Lord by aiding the Diocese with your presence, your labours, or your money, against the mighty powers of darkness, your cold indifference to the present sin and woes of your brethren, and the perils of perdition which are certainly awaiting them—surely, I say, these your shortcomings are not all to be laid at *my* door; Oh I trust not; and yet my dear brethren, how can I wish *you* to bear their weight and their punishment? But you know further that as Ambassadors for Christ we look for no small portion of our reward, through Him, as the result of presenting our flocks, "as a chaste virgin to Christ." Ah then, when I look around, when I look back, and consider how it is with both pastor and people, can I fail to be exceeding heavy at heart? Besides, the time wherein I can expect to work for Christ by being His humble instrument in building up His people in their most holy faith, or leading the wanderers back to His Cross, and so increase also that reward, which for His sake I venture to hope, all unworthy as I am, I may yet one day receive:—the time, I say, for all this, is rapidly passing away; I am this day fifty-eight years old! How short, probably, is the remnant of my probation; and yet how little is the service, such as I can hope was at all worthy of His acceptance, which during that time I have rendered to my God and Saviour! How feeble my best labours for His Church, and the world He came to snatch from the jaws of death! And yet to me His charity—His love—has been unbounded. Born of parents who did themselves, with remarkable singleness of heart, endeavour to follow Christ, I may, myself say, with my beloved mother, that I recollect not the time when I did not rejoice to regard myself as one of His "little ones;" but alas! with how much less of earnest subseqnent devotion than ever marked the life of my sainted mother. Still, I were most ungrateful to remarkable providential care over me, if I did not remember, with unaffected thankfulness, that for fifty years and more the fear of the Lord hath been the great principle by which I have striven to guide my life. Yea, the condescending gentleness and love of God are indeed incomprehensible, for amongst the first emotions of my infant heart, that I can recollect, were thoughts of God, and unspeakable gladness that I was His Child, followed by longing and

continuous desires to be permitted to serve in His sanctuary and aid His dear Son, as one of His humblest instruments in leading men to the eternal joys of His presence. And in the very tenderness of His condescending love, this *has* been the work of my life for more than thirty years. Oh that my "work of faith and labour of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ" had been more worthy of His most undeserved favour to me!

Pardon me, my dear friends, I had no thought of making my Heavenly Father's gracious dealings with myself so much the theme of my discourse when I sat down to prepare for our morning's service, but the recollections with which this day fills my heart will, I trust, sufficiently excuse me to your kindly affections;—and then my text, and its want of a more full developement in you—in each of us—tinging these remembrances with deep sadness, I cannot but ask, if after so many years of sincere, though most painfully short-coming, efforts, to follow Christ, and after being entrusted by Him for so long a period with His ministry of reconciliation, and not without some tokens that He was at my right hand, I cannot but ask I say, whether as the shadows of the setting sun of my life grow longer, and the messenger who is to summon me to an account of my stewardship cannot be very far off, especially seeing that the longest lived of my honoured parents passed as I trust and believe into Paradise, very little older than I now am, and of my brothers and sisters who have also "fallen asleep," none of them reached fifty-eight—I cannot but ask myself this day whether my closing path, especially as one of the Ambassadors for Christ, is, instead of shining "more and more unto the perfect day," to end surrounded by mists and with heaviness in my heart, because the people committed to my care, lack that greatest gift of *Charity* which alone can secure them the favour of Him whose name is *love*. How, my brethren, in such case could I hope to give up my "account with joy and not with grief"?

Yea such is my oft-times heaviness of heart, from the lukewarm condition of the Church of Christ in the land, and specially of the children of God committed to my charge in this place, and from a consequent deep sense of my own inefficiency, and from inward conflicts with sin and satan that I could almost wish the struggle of life was o'er and myself safe at rest in Abraham's bosom. Very fearful is that forgetfulness of God, and that open iniquity which abounds in our midst, but ah it is neither half so grievous to your Jesus, nor half so depressing to your pastor, as is the want of deep and earnest charity—heaven-born love—in those whom the Heavenly Bridegroom hath so fondly chosen to Himself and constituted as the 'joint heirs' of all His bliss and glory, if only they will "make their calling and election sure." So sad is it to *His* heart that the Holy One thus laments over, and thus threatens, the Laodicean Church, "I know thy works that thou art neither cold nor hot; I would thou

*wert* cold or hot, so then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth."—A fearful sentence this my beloved. But is there not a cause? Yea, both in a Saviour's wounded love, and in the fact, that "charity" and earnestness *in* the Church, would soon work a mighty change in the godless world itself. When the people of the Lord love much and work earnestly, satan falls as Dagon before the ark. Ah, do you wonder then my brethren, that I should have great heaviness and continued sorrow in my hesrt, when I behold *your* unworthy lukewarmness, yea when I see so few tokens amongst you of that "most excellent gift of charity." Alas! woe is me, for after my well nigh eleven years of longing labour, very perilous is this day the condition of many of you. Yea, I repeat, woe is me, for the days are very evil!

I would not charge you falsely, my dear friends, let us then for the remainder of the time allotted for our discourse this morning, briefly enquire, What would be effects of "that most excellent gift of Charity," the "greatest," as our text declares, "of all virtues," if it abounded in the hearts of God's children? and see, as we pass along, how far these effects are exhibited in ourselves.

I. And first as it would affect our conduct towards *God*. Loving Him deeply we should rejoice in honouring Him before men, before angels, and before devils. Now, as these cannot read our hearts, if they are to know our earnest love to God, it must be by our outward acts; and this is probably one reason why, at the last Great Day, the judgment is to be according to our works. Hence this love to God in men's hearts will lead them to make their Churches, as the temples of His special presence, as noble and richly beautiful as their means will possibly admit; far beyond the costliness or the splendour of their own habitations; and they will further diligently strive that the accompaniments of worship, its music, its chanting, its sacred vessels, its hangings, its priests' robes and such like are all of the most harmonious, the richest and the best, that their most diligent efforts and self-denying love can make or cause them to be. Earnest love *will* care for these things, knowing that angls, men, and devils all behold, and that the Most High does seek to be "glorified in His saints and admired in all them that believe." How is it then amongst ourselves in these respects? Is our loving reverential care for these matters such as to convince this "great cloud of witnesses," both holy and unholy, that we esteem our time and money chiefly as we can use them for the honour and glory of Him who first gave us His Son, and now waits to raise us to be partners of His Throne.

II. But again, this Charity—this love—the essence of all graces, will cause those who possess it, to make the House of Prayer and of God their *very home;* for the two fold reason, that they thereby honour their Heavenly Father publicly, and in doing so, do also specially meet Christ, Who has promised His peculiar presence

where His people thus assemble, and has covenanted on such occasions to give them without stint the large outpourings of His grace and Spirit; according to His unfailing promise, "Them that honour Me I will honour." Thus, it was when the disciples were assembled "with one accord in one place," that the first great outpouring of the Holy Ghost took place on the never-to-be-forgotten Day of Pentecost. And so it has ever been that they who feared the Lord forsook not the assembling of themselves together, but spake often one to another, in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, thus elevating each other's faith and love to God and His Christ; and concerning such it is said "the Lord hearkened, and heard, and a book of remembrance was written before Him for them that feared the Lord, and that *thought* upon His Name." Yes, certain as 'God is love,' true Christ-bestowed Charity will cause His people to throng His House, the House of His Glory, the blessed place of His special presence, whensoever it is possible. Whereas lukewarmness—Laodicean death,—will ever seek to find a thousand plausible excuses for frequenting His Temple as seldom as possible; for where there is no living fire in the heart, the flame thereof cannot ascend towards its parent sun of righteousness. The cold heart and corrupt affections of the lukewarm must needs prefer the chilling atmosphere, and the putrid exhalations of the world and the flesh.

Ah, brethren, can I be otherwise than deeply sad this day, as I reflect upon the mournful evidences of this deadly lukewarmness, so specially hateful to the Blessed Redeemer, which are but too visible amongst ourselves? I strove, as you know, for some time, and I trust with faithfulness, to gather, if only a very few of you together, on Wednesday and Friday *Mornings*, for united prayer to Him Who hath sealed the promise with His blood, that He will give whatsoever even two or three agree to ask in His name; very often ringing the bell myself, in the hope that its sacred sounds would arouse your sleepy consciences, before, all too late, the last Great Trumpet shall do so, and I have failed of meeting even the two or three, beyond my own family. I have thus entreated you to assemble in this House for prayer and praise to God and to obtain a blessing for yourselves, but all in vain, neither love to God nor care for your own souls would move the great bulk of you, children of God though you be! Again, I have caused the House of God to be regularly opened week after week on Wednesday and Friday *Evenings*, the one for full Divine Service and Preaching, and the other for Prayers and Bible Class with other religious instruction, but still often discouraged; until now, these holy walls witness to the recording Angel, for six days out of the seven, against the lukewarmness of those, who are thus alike callous to the love of Jesus, and indifferent to the heartfelt warning and entreaties of their Divinely appointed Shepherd! And what in such

case of the Seventh Day? Can we expect the souls so wedded to the world for all the week, to be filled with Christlike Charity—with gushing love and earnest longings after holiness, since, when on the seventh day they do come into the presence of God, it is with hearts all unprepared. Can we, I say, reasonably look for earnest devotion under such circumstances? No; that were indeed to expect to "gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles." Alas! how then can I help being depressed, as I contemplate on this my eight and fiftieth birthday, when the sands of life must needs be rapidly running out, such a cold and lifeless, such a Christ-dishonouring, and soul-perilling state of things prevailing amongst the people committed to my charge?

III. For mark you further, my yet dearly beloved, that a closed church is the sure token of closed, or at least, of lifeless closets, and of family altars never erected, or at most, carelessly attended. Is it not so? Am I not speaking the truth of your own experiences. To how much *earnest supplication*—prayers, in fact such as you can expect God to receive—do the bed-rooms of most of you bear witness? Answer, I pray you, as to God. And for *family prayers;* how conscientious is the regular attendance of every possible member of the family? What sincere attempt is there made to realise the Words of Life, as the Book of God is read amongst you? or to join at these family devotions with real thoughtful earnestness as at the Throne of Grace? Alas! alas! I know that the mere one day of worship, with its small and irregular attendance even then, reveals the sad truth, as regards too many of you, of the coldness and deadness of these other more private duties and privileges. "Be not deceived, God is not mocked; for whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap." And when God's House is obstinately and needlessly, in defiance of all warning and entreaty, closed on six days, how can you expect Him to water your souls, the first moment, that you deign as it were, to beckon to Him? And be assured that without His special grace and mercy, neither your Sunday worship, nor your closet or family prayers will have any earnest faith, love, power, or unction. "God is not mocked." I say nothing about your excuses. *Give them to God*, only see that they will stand the awful test of the last day when "every man's works shall be tried so as by fire." I humbly trust it is all right with some of you. Yet I am sure it is not, with the great bulk of my congregation. Alas! alas!

IV. But our time is expiring, we must however, for one moment, see what true 'Charity' would cause us to do for our Brother. Ah verily, real Gospel Charity would feed our Brother, it would clothe him, it would visit him; above all it would give him the Bread of Life. The sincere Child of God loves his brother *in*, Christ, and *for* Christ; hence his first question is *not*, Is he worthy?

but is he *in need?* Had Christ waited till *we* were worthy, where had we been this day?

So with respect to the spiritual needs of his fallen brother, the question with one who is filled with charity, is not so much, Can the Emigrant provide the ordinances of God, and fetch Christ to his settlement in the back woods for himself? Charity rather asks *Will he?* or is he too sold under sin to care? And so, whether it be the unwillingness or the poverty of the poor backwoodsman which requires the Church and her ordinances to be sent to him, the man who possesses that chiefest of the graces, Charity, denies himself to the utmost to snatch his brother from destruction, by sending to him the offer of Christ and His channels of grace and salvation.

And now my dear friends, once more I must do violence to myself, by placing before you our doings in this the infinitely greatest of all our Brothers' needs, and then ask *you* to say whether they betoken in ourselves, love like Christ's; or lukewarmness like that of the Laodiceans. Last year the total offerings of this parish for the love of Jesus beyond our own bounds, and for the salvation of the hordes perishing in this our own Diocese, was $82:30 to the Church Society. And when the Bishop sent men of God to arouse us to a deeper sense of our duty, and after my own earnest placing before you on Sunday last your privileges and duties as respected your coming here to meet this deputation, and to worship before God, the whole number present on Wednesday evening last, did not exceed 70 persons, men, women and children! The very meagre amount of our offerings last year, deeply showed the need there was for our "pure minds," if alas they are pure, "being stirred up by way of remembrance," and yet how many of you preferred your pleasures, your ease, or your gains to being then present. The theme was Christ, the object was to close the gates of hell to perishing thousands, and to give yourselves an opportunity of drawing close to Jesus now, and securing a nearer seat at His side amid the eternal glories of the resurrection, by leading you to acts of self-denying love for His sake, and you were, not a few of you, so needlessly absent, that you did not, and durst not, on your knees that night, ask the blessing of God upon your absence! I speak thus positively because I do believe that God has at least given me the grace and wisdom to engraft truer principles on your consciences, if you would only hearken to them. Ah what shall I do? what can I do more than I have done to arouse you to better things? And yet, alas! alas! the end doth draw near. I will however, conclude as I began—it is God's declaration, "Now abideth faith, hope, charity, but the greatest of these is charity." Without faith it is impossible to please God, without hope you will faint by the way; but without *charity*—the love of God in your hearts,—faith and hope will both perish, and no Crown could then be yours, for you would not have loved sufficiently to bear His Cross.